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Baldock Urban District.

ANNUAL MEDICAL
REPORT FOR 1925.

The Health of Baldock

MEDICAL OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT

INTERESTING FACTS AND FIGURES

The annual report of the Medical Officer of Health for Baldock (Dr. Bertram Suggit), which was presented at the last meeting of the Baldock Urban District Council, states:—

I beg to present my tenth annual report on the health and sanitary conditions of your district, and the first of a series of survey reports as required by the Ministry of Health.

This survey report covers the five years 1921 to 1925 inclusive, and during this period 194 houses out of your Council's new housing scheme were completed, the other two houses being built in 1920, a total of 196.

Progress in water supply is marked by the fact that 138 connections have been to the Council's mains during the five years, exclusive of the new houses; and out of 799 houses, 716 receive their water through these mains.

Water mains were laid on to the Klondyke area by June, 1921. The new sewerage works were in operation by 17th Oct., 1921; and sewers were laid down and a water-carriage system completed for practically the whole of the town by September, 1922.

With regard to clinics, a voluntary Maternity and Child Welfare Centre was opened on 5th May, 1922, and a Tuberculosis Dispensary in 1923.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

The area of your district is 362 acres. The population at census 1921 was 2,477; the Registrar-General's figure for 1925 is 2,718, and my own estimate, which takes into account the large increase in the number of houses, is 3,300.

Baldock is situated on a dry chalky subsoil in longitude 0° 11' W. and latitude 51° 59' N. in a slight depression varying from 194 to 280ft. above sea level. The River Ivel arises from numerous springs to the north of the town. The district is well wooded and is traversed by the Great North Road; and from west to east lies the old Roman Icknield Way.

The rainfall for 1925 was 23.88 inches; the wettest month being February with 3.18in., and the driest June with only 0.14in. for two wet days. The heaviest fall occurred on 23rd August, when one inch was registered.

For the five years the average annual rainfall was 22.64in.; the year 1921 with 11.53in. being the driest on record, and the year 1924 with 31.09in. being only exceeded by the year 1903 with a fall of 33.69in.

The number of inhabited houses at census of 1921 was 621, and the number of families or separate occupiers was 629.

The rateable value is £12,197 and the sum represented by a penny rate £45.

The chief occupations are malting, brewing, agriculture and sheet-metal working. A large proportion of the population are employed in the neighbouring Garden City of Letchworth and also in London.

The total number of births for the year 1925 was 47 (20 males and 27 females), one of whom, a male, was illegitimate. The birth-rate I estimate at 14.2 per 1,000 population, the Registrar-General's figure would be 17.3. Compare with 18.3 the rate for England and Wales. For the five years the average annual number of births is 47.4.

I make the total number of deaths for 1925 to be 29 (14 males and 15 females), whereas the Registrar-General gives us one more female death. For the five years the average annual number of deaths is 34.6. On my figures for population and number of deaths, the death-rate is 8.8; and the Registrar-General's figure would be 11.0 per 1,000 population. Compare with 12.2 the rate for England and Wales.

No women died in, or in consequence of, childbirth. The infant mortality rate (deaths of children under one year of age per 1,000 births) was 21.3 Compare with 75 the rate for England and Wales. For the five years the infant mortality rate averaged 52.99.

There were no deaths of illegitimate infants and none from measles, whooping-cough or diarrhoea (under 2 years of age).

The amount of poor law relief for 1925 was £1,035 11s. 6d.

HEALTH SERVICES

Hospitals for tuberculosis, maternity cases and children are provided by the County Council outside your area.

We have the privilege of sending cases to the fever and small-pox hospitals outside your area, for which we pay a retaining fee and a charge of 13s. per day per patient.

This fee of £20 per annum is payable to the joint board of the Hitchin Rural and Letchworth Urban District Councils.

Other hospitals available are outside your area, the Letchworth Hospital, providing 27 beds and the North Herts and South Beds Hospital at Hitchin 24 beds.

Two motor ambulances at Letchworth are available for infectious cases and accidents, etc.

The voluntary Maternity and Child Welfare Centre in Pinnock's Lane carries on the good work which the figures below show for 1925.

| | |
|---|-----|
| Number of children attending ... | 983 |
| Number of children on books | 80 |
| Number of times centre was open | 49 |
| Number of consultations with doctor | 350 |

The following figures from the County Tuberculosis Officer for the Baldock Dispensary give for the year 1925:

| | |
|---|-----|
| Number of new patients examined in the area | 37 |
| Number of patients attending Dispensary | 31 |
| Total number of attendances | 194 |
| Number of times Dispensary was open | 24 |
| Number of patients admitted to institutions | 13 |

The Public Health staff consists of the Medical Officer of Health, (part time) and the Sanitary Inspector (whole time), who is also surveyor, manager of cemetery and inspector of animals and meat. Salary contributions are made by Exchequer grants in the case of both officers.

A midwife subsidised by the County Council works in our district and outside it; and is school nurse, health visitor, tuberculosis nurse, and in addition attends the Maternity and Child Welfare Centre.

Legislation in force:—

- (1) Public Health Amendment Act, 1890, part 3.
- (2) An Order that the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act, 1889, be extended to chicken-pox is dated January 14th, 1903.
- (4) By-laws for water supply, 1907.
- (3) Regulations for dairies, cowsheds and milkshops, 1906.
- (5) Regulations re cemetery, 1920.

- (6) Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1907, part 2, except sec. 23 and part 3, from July 23rd, 1923.
- (7) Baldock Urban (Offensive Trades) Confirmation Order, 1924.
- (8) By-laws (new series) relating to new streets and buildings operate from May 29th, 1925.
- (9) Small Dwellings Acquisition Act, 1899, now administered by your Council with consent of County Council.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES

Water Supply.—A metered supply is obtained in bulk from Messrs. First Garden City Ltd., Letchworth, and is distributed by the Council in their own mains. The supply is constant and sufficient at present, but the water is very hard and is considered to be somewhat costly. Five new connections with the mains were made during the year, and this includes a supply to cottages previously dependent upon wells, 14 (2 connections); new dwelling-house, 1; other premises, 2.

There are still a number of dwelling-houses in the district which are dependent upon wells for water supply.

Drainage and Sewerage.—Practically the whole of the present district is sewered, but several of the older sewers are very far from satisfactory, they are not self cleansing, and require constant flushing and attention to keep them running. The trouble is very largely increased by the fact that there are so many water closets of an obsolete type which are without flushing cisterns and are not sufficiently hand flushed to keep the drains and sewers, with which they are connected, clear. There appears to be no definite authority for compelling the introduction of flushing cisterns generally.

To achieve this it would be necessary to consider each case individually and prove that the closet is "insufficient."

The sewage is disposed of upon about seven acres of land. It is collected in a storage tank after screening, and is pumped to a sedimentation tank, from which it gravitates over the irrigation area. Most of the irrigation area is let to and cultivated by a farmer. The arrangement appears adequate for present needs.

Scavenging.—Only house refuse is dealt with, and this collected in an uncovered two wheel cart. The refuse is dumped upon a low lying portion of the sewage works land, and every possible care is taken to burn paper, etc., spread the refuse in thin layers, and cover with soil when available. It would appear that an alternative method of disposal will have to be considered within about two years. Most of the dwelling houses in the district are provided with moveable receptacles for house refuse, but some are of an unsatisfactory nature and without proper covers. Efforts are being continuously made to get these replaced.

There are, to my knowledge, no fixed ashpits.

Sanitary Inspection. — Number of inspections.

| | |
|--|----|
| Housing defects | 79 |
| Nuisances.— | |
| Drains | 18 |
| Animals | 8 |
| Overcrowding | 6 |
| Slaughter houses, dairies, work-shops, etc. | 34 |
| Disinfections | 8 |
| Separate premises.— | |
| Housing defects | 50 |
| Drains | 9 |
| Animals | 2 |
| Overcrowding | 3 |
| Number of notices served.— | |
| Housing defects— | |
| Formal notices | 1 |

Informal notices 24
 Formal outstanding from 1924 .. 23
 Informal outstanding from 1924 .. 2
 Remedied after formal action ... 10
 Remedied after informal action 18
 Void or demolished 14
 Outstanding 8

Nuisances—
 Drains remedied after informal action 9
 Animals remedied after formal action (proceedings) 1
 Animals remedied after informal action 1
 Overcrowding not yet remedied after informal action.
 Closets remedied after informal action 2
 Miscellaneous remedied after informal action 1
 Premises controlled by by-laws.—
 Slaughter houses (2 licensed and 2 registered): The by-laws in force are dated 1875. Offensive trades: A list of offensive trades has been approved by the Ministry of Health, but by-laws have not yet been adopted.

Schools.—The sanitary condition and water supply of schools are satisfactory. Closure was only resorted to for six days in the case of the C.C. Pond Lane School on account of illness and contagion of teachers at the close of December. There were 35 exclusions for impetigo, verminous heads, ringworm and scabies, a rather extensive outbreak of impetigo occurring in the boys' department, Park Street School, which was dealt with by daily supervision and treatment for several days.

HOUSING

General housing conditions.—The general housing conditions are variable. In the older parts of the town these are not good on account of the closeness and antiquity of the houses, whereas in the more modern types of houses there is more free air space around, and sanitary conveniences, etc., are provided.

The shortage of houses is estimated at 90; but at the present time no measures are being taken to combat this.

The large increase in the population during the five years under review is about 800, and is mainly due to immigration from other districts.

Overcrowding.—There is no doubt that this exists to a certain extent. The chief cause is usually found to be due to large families living in small houses and unable to pay the rent of a larger house. No measures are being taken at present to deal with this difficult problem, which is an economic one. One or two cases of overcrowding have been dealt with informally.

Fitness of houses.—The general standard of housing is fair, but there are several houses not fit for human habitation; the general character of the defects found to exist being the smallness of rooms, general bad repair, bad drainage, poor closet accommodation, small windows, lack of washing facilities and no provision for storage of food. These defects are due to old and unremunerative property in the hands of owners or estates with small means.

Action taken as regards unfit houses is that the worst cases are separately dealt with, also a scheme was prepared in 1920 (see below).

Difficulties found in remedying unfitness, as stated above, are due to small owners, and your Council have no funds available to take action. Your Council and their officers do all in their power to remedy defects by persuasion rather than resort to formal action.

House conditions as regards water supply and refuse disposal are fairly satisfactory, but closet accommodation is generally poor in the older houses.

Unhealthy areas.—The Norton End area comes under this heading, and the Baldock housing improvement scheme prepared in 1920 to deal with this blot on your district, was deferred by the Ministry of Health on the grounds of economy.

HOUSING STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1925

New houses.—Two only built without State assistance.

Unfit dwellings.—

Total number inspected for housing defects 50
 (N.B.—Number of inspections, 79)
 Number inspected and recorded 14
 Number found to be "unfit" 1
 Number not in all respects reasonably fit 13
 Remedied as result of informal action—

Informal action in previous year 7
 Informal action in 1925 8
 (N.B.—still pending, 6).

Action under statutory powers.—

A. Housing Acts—

Notices requiring repairs nil
 Dwellings rendered fit after notice—
 (a) By owners (notice previous year) 9
 (b) By local authority nil
 Closing orders operative as result of owners' declaration ... nil

B. Public Health Acts—

Notices served nil
 Remedied nil

C. Proceedings under Secs. 11, 14 and 15—

Number of representations re Closing Order 1
 Closing Orders made 1
 Closing Orders determined 1
 Demolition Orders made nil
 Houses demolished (orders made previous year)
 By owners 7
 By Council in default 4
 Total 11

General.—

Demolition orders made but not enforced 3
 Closing orders made but not yet enforced 22
 Houses suitable for occupation by persons of the working classes lost for various reasons during past five years, approx. 31

FOOD

Milk supply.—The wholesomeness of the milk produced within your district is of exceptional quality, and by the time this report is published "Certified" milk is on sale. Other milk coming into your district is of a good average.

It has not been necessary to take any action as to tuberculous milk or cattle.

No licences were granted during 1925 for the sale of milk under special designations.

There were no refusals or revocations of registrations of retailers or of licences during the year.

Meat.—Under the Public Health (Meat) Regulations, 1924, your Council have arranged that times of slaughtering, other than the regular days, shall be notified to the Sanitary Inspector so that he may have the opportunity of being present.

The administration of these regulations as regards stalls, shops, stores and vehicles are being carried out as far as practicable.

There are no public slaughterhouses, and the number of private ones is as follows.—

| | In 1920 | In Jan. 1925 | In Dec. 1925 |
|------------------|---------|--------------|--------------|
| Registered | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Licensed | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 4 | 4 | 4 |

Bakehouses.—There are four bakehouses, which are kept in a satisfactory condition.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

The following figures set out consecutively the number of notifiable diseases, other than tuberculosis, for the five years 1921 to 1925 inclusive.

| | 1921 | 1922 | 1923 | 1924 | 1925 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Scarlet Fever ... | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Diphtheria | 0 | 15 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Puerperal Fever 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Pneumonia | 2 | 4 | 12 | 6 | 2 |
| Erysipelas | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Ophthalmia | | | | | |
| Neonatorum ... | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Encephalitis | | | | | |
| Lethargica | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chicken-pox | 0 | 0 | 4 | 33 | 58 |

Scarlet Fever.—Of these cases two were removed to hospital in 1921 and one in 1922. There were two return cases during 1921. In 1925 there were three cases in one house. Age-groups in 1925 were: one, 4—5 years; two, 5—10 years; and one, 10—15 years.

Diphtheria.—All cases of diphtheria were sent to hospital and prompt use made of antitoxin. There was one death in 1923. One case was notified in 1925, but on the receipt of a negative bacteriological report the notification was withdrawn. The epidemic in January and February, 1922, when the attack rate was 6.00 per 1,000 population, was traced to one slight case which was discovered by examining all the school children for sources of infection. This child suffering from diphtheria was going to school as usual.

Puerperal Fever.—One case was admitted to hospital, and one died in 1922. The age-group in both 1925 cases was 20—35 years.

Pneumonia.—Cases removed to hospital were four in 1922, six in 1923, two in 1924 and two in 1925. The number of deaths of lobar pneumonia were five during 1923, four in 1924 and one in 1925. Two of the fatal cases in 1923 were associated with overcrowding when the attack rate was exceptionally high and the death rate for that year was 1.91 per 1,000 population. The age-groups of 1925 were: one, 2—3 years; and one, 20—35 years. The one death in 1925 occurred in age-group 20 to 35 years.

Erysipelas.—One case went to hospital in 1921. One patient in 1923 was removed to hospital and died.

Ophthalmia Neonatorum.—Two cases went to hospital, one in 1923 and one in 1925. In the 1925 case vision was impaired in both eyes.

Encephalitis Lethargica.—This case of 1921 was of a mild and doubtful kind.

Chicken Pox.—This was made notifiable in 1923, but the fact has only recently been realised. This partly accounts for the small returns for the years 1921, 1922, and 1923, though there were few cases during these three years. Most of the cases in 1924 were during July, and those in 1925 from March to June. Age-groups of 1925 were as follows: one under 1 year; two, 1—2 years; three, 2—3 years; seven, 3—4 years; two, 4—5 years; thirty-four, 5—10 years; eight, 10—15 years; one, 15—20 years.

Bacteriological examinations are made by the Counties Public Health Laboratories; and in addition to those made whilst patients are in hospital, the number of examinations for the five years under review is 30.

Each infectious case notified is investigated for source of infection and contacts; isolation of the patient is by removal to hospital where necessary, and disinfection of room is carried out at the proper time. Sick and Dick tests have not been made use of, and no vaccinations have been done under the P.H. (Small Pox Prevention) Regulations, 1917.

Measles was epidemic in June and July, 1923, and confined to one school in June, 1924.

Mumps was epidemic from October to December, 1923.

Whooping-cough was prevalent in December, 1925.

Influenza has been prevalent every year during the spring and winter months; and the mortality for the five years under review is 5.

Where school intimations of disease are given, a visit is paid to that school, the illness investigated and action taken accordingly.

There are no special facilities avail-

able in the area for cleansing and disinfection of verminous persons, premises and articles.

Tuberculosis.—

| Age Periods | In 1925 New Cases | | | | Deaths | |
|-------------|----------------------|----|---------------|----|-----------|----|
| | Pulmonary | | Non-pulmonary | | Pulmonary | |
| | M. | F. | M. | F. | M. | F. |
| 1—5 | | | 1 | 1 | | |
| 5—10 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | | |
| 10—15 | 1 | | | | | |
| 20—25 | | | | | 1 | |
| 25—35 | 1 | 2 | | | | |
| 35—45 | | | | | 1 | |
| 45—55 | | | | | 1 | |
| Totals | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |

Returns for the five years

| | 1921 | 1922 | 1923 | 1924 | 1925 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| New cases notified— | | | | | |
| Pulmonary | 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| Non - pulmonary | 0 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 5 |
| Deaths— | | | | | |
| Pulmonary | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Non - pulmonary | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

In conclusion I would like to thank our Sanitary Inspector for his ready help in Public Health matters, and for information given to me.

Your obedient servant,

BERTRAM SUGGIT,

M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H.,

Medical Officer of Health.

July 7th, 1926.

